



Data Points

CWHS

RESULTS FROM THE CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

Colorectal cancer, which occurs in the rectum or colon, is the third leading cause of cancer death for women in California.¹ Factors that put women at higher risk for colorectal cancer are older age, family history of cancer, inflammatory bowel disease, having had colorectal cancer or polyps (growths in the colon or rectum), sedentary lifestyle, and a diet low in fiber and high in saturated fat. Colorectal cancer is preventable and, if found early, curable. The most effective prevention measure is regular screening. Women ages 50 and older and younger women at high risk should be screened regularly for polyps and precancerous lesions, which can be removed before becoming cancerous. Few women receive regular colorectal cancer screening, and Hispanic women are least likely to be screened.²

The 2000 California Women's Health Survey asked 1,398 women ages 50 and older if and when they had a fecal occult blood test (FOBT), sigmoidoscopy, or colonoscopy to screen for colorectal cancer. Women who had no screening were asked why they have not been screened.

Results: Overall, 75% of women ages 50 and older reported ever having either type of screening test for colorectal cancer.

- More White women reported ever having an FOBT (70%), followed by Asian (69%), Black (57%), and Hispanic (51%) women.
- More Black women reported ever having a sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy (59%), followed by White (55%), Asian (47%) and Hispanic (40%) women.
- Just 44% of women reported being screened within the past year. White women were most likely to have been recently screened (48%), followed by Asian (43%), Black (42%), and Hispanic (40%) women.
- Women ages 75 and older were less likely to have been screened in the past year than younger women (42% versus 48%).
- The primary reasons for women ages 50+ never having an FOBT or sigmoidoscopy varied by race/ethnicity and included: doctor did not recommend, test was not wanted, test was not needed (low risk), no time to take test, and other – cost, embarrassment, test preparation, fear (see graph).

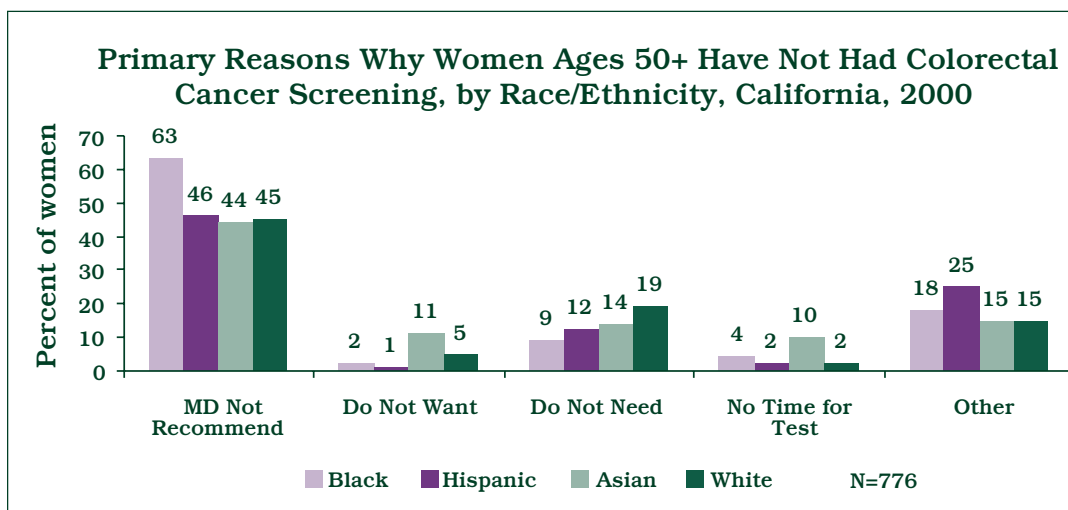
COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENING, CALIFORNIA, 2000

CMRI (California Medical Review, Inc.)

Public Health Message:

The majority of women surveyed ages 50 and older have been screened at least once for colorectal cancer. However, less than half of these women have been screened within the past year. Guidelines recommend annual screening for colorectal cancer.

¹ Kwong SL, et al. Cancer in California: 1988-1998. Sacramento, CA: CA Dept. of Health Services, Cancer Surveillance Section, December 2000.
² MMWR. Screening for Colorectal Cancer – U.S. 1997. Feb. 19, 1999; 48(06):116-121.



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